

Marie Antoinette

- Queen of France 1755-1793
- Birthdate: November 2, 1755 in Vienna, Austria; Death date: October 16, 1793 in Paris, France
- Marie's nickname during rule was "Madame Deficit" due to her large amounts of spending.
 - She became a symbol of excesses of the monarchy
- When the Seven Years' War ended, alliances with Austria was fragile. In order to strengthen the relationship, the two countries united in marriage.
 - 14-year-old Marie married the Dauphin of France, 15-year-old Louis in May of 1770. The two did not consummate their marriage for a long time; their first child was born 8 years after they were wed.
 - She was the youngest daughter of Holy Roman Emperor Francis I and Empress Maria Teresa.
- Marie was vivacious, outgoing and bold, a social butterfly who loved gambling, partying and extravagant fashions. Her character could not have been more different to King Louis XVI
- Beginning in 1780, Marie began spending more and more time at the Petit Trianon, her private castle on the grounds of the Palace of Versailles, usually without the King.
- During the 1780s, with the French government sliding into financial turmoil and poor harvests driving up grain prices across the country, Marie Antoinette's fabulously extravagant lifestyle increasingly became the subject of popular ire.
- Countless pamphlets accused the queen of ignorance, extravagance and adultery, some featuring salacious cartoons and others dubbing her "Madame Deficit"
- In 1785, an infamous diamond-necklace scandal permanently tarnished the queen's reputation. A thief posing as Marie had obtained a 647-diamond necklace and smuggled it to London to be sold off in pieces. Though Marie was innocent, she was nevertheless guilty in the eyes of the people.
 - Refusing to let public criticism alter her behavior, in 1786, Marie Antoinette began building the Hameau de la Reine, an extravagant retreat near the Petit Trianon in Versailles.
- On October 6, 1789, a crowd estimated at 10,000 gathered outside the Palace of Versailles and demanded that the king and queen be brought to Paris, the always indecisive Louis XVI acted almost paralyzed. Marie immediately stepped into his place, meeting with advisers and ambassadors and dispatching urgent letters to other European rulers begging them to help save France's monarchy.
- The royal family attempted to escape France in June 1791, but they were captured and returned to Paris. In September of that year, King Louis XVI agreed to uphold a new constitution drafted by the Constituent National Assembly in return for keeping his symbolic power.
- However, in the summer of 1792, with France at war with Austria and Prussia, the radical Jacobin leader Maximillian de Robespierre called for the removal of the king.
- In September 1792, after a month of terrible massacres in Paris, the National Convention abolished the monarchy, declared the establishment of a French Republic, and arrested the King and Queen.
- In October of 1793, a month into the infamous and bloody Reign of Terror that claimed tens of thousands of French lives, Marie Antoinette was put on trial for treason and theft, as well as a false and disturbing charge of sexual abuse against her own son
 - After the 2-day trial, an all-male jury found Marie guilty on all charges. She was sent to the guillotine.
- Thomas Jefferson once said, predicting the way Marie would be viewed by the future, "I have ever believed that if there had been no Queen, there would have been no revolution."